

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 CU-04 HA-05 /068 W
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P R 210510Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6306
INFO AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 0939

PLEASE PASS USIA/EA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ID, SOPN
SUBJECT: GOI ARRESTS STUDENT DISSIDENTS/BANS PUBLICATION
FIVE PROMINENT DAILIES

REF: JAKARTA 0808

1. SUMMARY. ITS PATIENCE APPARENTLY EXHAUSTED BY THE STEADY INCREASE IN DISSIDENT ACTIVITY, THE GOVERNMENT OF INDONESIA (GOI) HAS REPORTEDLY ARRESTED A NUMBER OF STUDENT DISSIDENTS (ONE SOURCE SAYS ABOUT 100) AND BANNED THE PUBLICATION OF FIVE PROMINENT JAKARTA DAILIES. THE SWIFT GOVERNMENT MOVE, AIMED AT PRE-EMPTING PLANNED ANTI-GOI DEMONSTRATIONS AND MUTING OVERT EXPRESSIONS OF DISSENT, MAY HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESS SOURCES HAVE INFORMED US (AND SECURITY OFFICIALS HAVE PRIVATELY CONFIRMED) THAT GOI SECURITY FORCES HAVE ARRESTED A NUMBER OF DISSIDENT STUDENT LEADERS IN JAKARTA DURING THE PAST 24 HOURS. ONE RESPONSIBLE PRESS SOURCE
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PUTS THE NUMBER DEAINED AT ABOUT 100, WHILE ANOTHER TOLD US THAT "THE MILITARY" HAD BROKEN UP A STUDENT-ARRANGED SEMINAR ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF INDONESIA (UI) THIS MORNING, ARRESTING SIX.

3. IN AN APPARETLY COMPANION MOVE, TO ASSURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN WAS NOT GIVEN INCENDIARY PUBLCITY,

THE GOI LAST NIGHT BANNED THE PUBLICATION OF FIVE OF JAKARTA'S MOST PROMINENT DAILY NEWSPAPERS: THE PRESTIGIOUS KOMPAS, LIBERAL AND LITERATE SINAR HARAPAN, LEFTIST/ NATIONALIST MERDEKA, MOSLEM-ORIENTED PELITA (ALL INDONESIAN LANGUAGE) AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INDONESIAN TIMES. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE INDONESIAN OBSERVER, AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPER TIED TO MERDEKA, THE REMAINING DAILY PAPERS IN JAKARTA ARE EITHER GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED OR INCONSEQUENTIAL IN TERMS OF CONTENT OR CIRCULATION. WHILE PRESS SOURCES ORIGINALLY SPECULATED THAT THE PUBLICATION BAN WOULD BE SHORT-LIVED, A KIND OF SHOCK THERAPY TO MUTE THE INCREASINGLY FRANK PRESS COVERAGE OF DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES, THE SUBSEQUENT REVELATION OF STUDENT ARRESTS AND SOME BUREAUCRATIC INFIGHTING WITHIN THE GOI ABOUT WHO WILL ADMINISTER THE BAN SUGGESTS TO SOME JOURNALISTS A LONGER PERIOD OF SUSPENSION.

4. COMMENT. THE SUDDEN GOI CRACKDOWN, CLEARLY AIMED AT PREEMPTING PLANNED ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN JAKARTA OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS AND MUTING THE PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF DISSENT, MAY HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT, ESPECIALLY IN THE LONGER TERM. WHILE STUDENTS AND OTHER DISSIDENTS MAY BE SOMEWHAT INTIMIDATED OR HAVE TO RE-GROUP, THEY HAVE BEEN HANDED A CAUSE CELEBRE WHICH COULD WIN SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAUSE FROM THE MUCH WIDER BODY OF NON-ACTIVIST STUDENTS. THE BANNING OF

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THE PRESS, WHICH WILL LIMIT THE PUBLICATION OF DETAILS ABOUT DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES AND COMPLAINTS, WILL NOT STOP THE JAKARTA RUMOR MILL OR QUIET GROWING PUBLIC NERVOUSNESS ABOUT THE INCREASING UNREST. MOREOVER, WHILE SECURITY OFFICIALS INDICATED TO US PRIVATELY THEIR CONFIDENCE THAT THE ARRESTS IN JAKARTA LEAVE THEM "IN CONTROL" OF THE SITUATION HERE, THEY EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN BANDUNG, JOGJAKARTA AND SURABAYA, WHERE NO ARRESTS HAVE SO FAR BEEN REPORTED.

MASTERS

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